

emoffett

From: "Dave Hackett" <hackett@pff.net>
To: <KoreaMissionReports@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 23, 2004 2:56 PM
Subject: [KoreaMissionReports] PCUSA News: Legendary Korea missionary dies

Today PCUSA News posted this wonderful news article about David Seel's passing.

-- Dave Hackett (UPCUSA - Taejon '79-'81 and onetime beneficiary of the excellent ministry care at Jesus Hospital)

-----Original Message-----

From: PCUSA NEWS
Sent: Tuesday, November 23, 2004 11:34 AM

Legendary Korea missionary dies

Cancer surgeon and researcher David Seel served 37 years

by Alexa Smith

LOUISVILLE - A memorial service has been set for Nov. 27 in Montreat (NC) Presbyterian Church celebrating the life of a missionary surgeon who spent his entire career in South Korea.

David John Seel, 79, a noted cancer surgeon and researcher, died Nov. 20 in a hospital in Birmingham, AL. He suffered from Alzheimer's Disease.

"David, with his wife, Mary, went to Korea right after the devastating Korean War as a medical missionary. He was the director of the Presbyterian Medical Center - at Jesus Hospital - in southwest Korea, in Chonju," said Insik Kim, the PC(USA)'s area coordinator for East Asia and the Pacific.

"Under his leadership, the Presbyterian Medical Center was expanded and ... he introduced the care and treatment of cancer patients (to the hospital's protocol) for the first time in the region." Kim said. "His medical ministry hasn't stopped."

Kim said that Seel prodded both the hospital and Korea's Presbyterians to begin sending medical missionaries to other countries, gradually commissioning nurses and doctors to serve in eight other parts of the world.

Seel was born to Presbyterian missionary parents, Miriam Rood and Edward Seel, who served in Chile and Colombia. He was born April 4, 1925, in Bradenton, FL, and attended Maryville (TN) College. He graduated from Tulane

University's School of Medicine in 1948.

Seel completed his surgical training at Tulane, served as a lieutenant in the United States Navy from 1946 to 1950 and did additional oncology study at the Sloane-Kettering Medical Center in New York City, and M.D. Anderson Hospital in Houston, TX.

In Korea, Seel served as a cancer surgeon at Jesus Hospital for 37 years, beginning in 1953 when he and his wife, Mary, were commissioned as PC(USA) missionaries. He directed the hospital from 1969 to 1988, training countless physicians who now serve around the world. During his tenure, a new 600-bed hospital was built.

"He focused totally on the patient, listened to their every word," said the Rev. Megan Ritchie, who as a novice missionary in the early 1970s observed Seel working with some of Korea's poorest people. "He was compassionate. Gentle. I felt like I watching the hands of Christ in action."

Upon his return to the United States, Seel established the cancer registry at the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Asheville, NC, retiring in 1997.

He served as an elder at the Montreat Presbyterian Church, a board member of King College, the Medical Benevolence Foundation and the Presbyterian Children's Home in Asheville. Seel also established the Bruised Reed Foundation to serve the needs of cancer patients in Korea.

Called a "renaissance man" by his friends, Seel was a noted author, painter and violinist. His family intends to publish his final book, *Scalpel of Truth* - a collection of Seel's reflections as a surgeon - posthumously.

Seel received numerous awards for his work, including Presbyterians for Renewal's Bell-McKay Award, the Korean Red Cross' Humanitarian Award and the "Outstanding Lifetime Achievement Award" from Tulane University. In the fall of that year, Montreat College awarded Seel an honorary doctorate.

"He was a surgeon, an extremely good doctor ... and he also did a lot of cancer research. That research may be one of his greatest legacies. He wrote dozens of articles for medical and scientific journals," said Virginia Sommerville of Montreat, who, along with her husband, John, entered missionary service in Korea at the same time as the Seels.

"He had a wonderful sense of humor. He enjoyed a good joke. And he also enjoyed relaxing," she said, recalling all-night games of the card game, Rook.

Seel is survived by his wife, Mary; his brother, Bob Seel of Tucson, AZ; and his sister, Betty Peterson of Hampton, VA; one son, David John Seel Jr. of Dallas, TX, and his wife, Kathryn; two daughters, Jennifer Seel Cromartie of Arlington, VA, and her husband, Mike, and Christine Seel Ritchie of Birmingham, AL, and her husband, Tim; and eight grandchildren.

DAVID JOHN SEEL, M. D. (FACS)

KOREA

HOMETOWN: Montreat, North Carolina

EDUCATION: Maryville College
Tulane University, College of Arts and Sciences B S
Tulane University School of Medicine M D
Internship, New Orleans Charity Hospital

EXPERIENCE: U. S. Navy
Residency in Surgery: New Orleans Charity Hospital
Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, NY
Attending Staff Surgeon, M. D. Anderson Hospital, Houston, TX
Missionary Surgeon, Presbyterian Medical Center, Chonju, Korea

FAMILY: Wife: Mary Batchelor Seel
Children: David John, Jr. 29 May 26, 1953
Jennifer 27 Feb. 16, 1955
Christine 19 Nov. 10, 1962

David Seel serves as Director of the 340-bed medical center known as Jesus Hospital in Chonju, Korea, 160 miles southwest of Seoul. He describes the hospital as a witnessing community of some 700 medical workers, disciples of Jesus Christ, who are engaged in the ministry of healing. They seek to emphasize whole person medicine, stressing the importance of prayer and spiritual regeneration through Jesus Christ as well as excellence in scientific medical care, with cancer management, rehabilitation and community health as primary focal points. Through the evangelistic efforts at the hospital, as many as 2000 people per year come to make decisions for Christ. This is an example of the Church at work among the afflicted to bring hope and new life in Christ.

David cites as highlights of the past term the construction of a Critical Care Annex, the training of two colleagues in head and neck surgery, the launching of a branch hospital in a mountainous area to serve 50,000 rural people, and the establishment of a support society which has sent three medical missionaries to Bangladesh.

Diplomate, American Board of Surgery, 1960
Fellow American College of Surgeons
Member, Society of Surgical Oncology
Member, Society of Head and Neck Surgeons

(Note: If you want a more detailed C.V. including contributions to literature, etc., let me know. Will send photo from Montreat.)

David

(August, 1982)

Thoughts of The Times

By Martha Huntley

Thanksgiving came early for a lot of folks around Chonju this year.

The occasion was Wednesday, November 10, when under a canopy of clear Korean sky and the flags of three nations, the new Presbyterian Medical Center was dedicated.

Two and a half million dollars, 250 beds, and the new building of the hospital best known in Korea as the Jesus Hospital was baptized.

A festive air, much like an American football game mood, surrounded the proceedings. This was a time of sheer joy, of high spirits, of a dream come true. The first thing that met the eye was a bevy of nurses in *hanbok*, each more beautiful than the next, to escort guests to their seats. How did they ever get so many pretty girls in one hospital? The sleek hairdos, the sparkling smiles combined with demure eyelashes, the glorious pinks and golds and reds and blues and greens of the Korean dresses—what a first impression!

The army band played. Missionary children on the hill lined up in the distance like birds on a telephone pole to watch the proceedings. Photographers darted in and out. Friends greeted friends from all over Korea and from abroad. There was something of a family reunion feeling too with warm handclaps, and happy exclamations in several languages—"when did you get here? It's so good to see you!" Ahead of me in the sign-in line a Pakistani girl, an Indian couple, an American Air Force officer and a clutch of Seoul doctors were writing their names between greeting friends.

The audience fluttered down. There were military uniforms, nun's habits, Korean *hanbok*, business suits, a red suit with pink shirt and lavender tie, beards, saris, miniskirts, pants suits. But all were happy to be here on this chrysanthemum day.

The loud speaker system stuttered; the national anthems of two nations rang out. Dr. Kim Hyung-mo's invocation was one of dignified gratitude. (How many invocations has this old saint of Korea, my next-door neighbor, given, I wondered?)

Dr. David Seel, the director, gave the welcoming address. Here is a man of deep faith, great integrity and a golden tongue! I tried to see his wife Mary, but could not over the crowd. Yet I knew what an expression of pride and joy she would be wearing.

"The dream," as David Seel has said, "was to build in Chonju a Christian Medical Center—a center for scientific healing, for medical education, and for compassionate witness. The quest has absorbed the lives and efforts of hundreds in Chonju and of thousands around the world. One man sold his car to contribute to the cause. Another struggled for its fulfillment

man's influence on education in his country. I thought of the young people. I thought of John Talmadge, president of the former Taejon College, who gladly moved over to let Dr. Kim take the presidency of the merged colleges.

The sermon "Abundant Life" by Rev. Han Kyung-jik, surely a *hyulihan* person—a splendid person. This man, who has so ably been at the wheel of one of the great churches of the world, Yongnak Church, has so many things about him one could praise or admire. Not least is the many missionaries grateful for the simplicity of his language, as well as its eloquence, that enables them to get some grace from his sermons too!

A prayer by former moderator of the Presbyterian Church, Suh Chung-tae. And then the long ritualistic line of government speakers—men in high places who speak to signify the acceptance and participation of their peoples in a good work...while their people wait patiently for the oratory to end.

National Assembly Vice Speaker Chang Kyung-soon; Ambassador of West Germany Wilfried Sarrazin (a white-haired man who spoke of the 515 million won contributed by the Protestant Churches of Germany "in the spirit of Christian brotherhood." I realized suddenly that 30 years ago Germany was our enemy, and Koreans were slave laborers and forced soldiers in the armies of Japan. So much for war and peace.)

Minister of Health and Social Affairs Lee Kyung-ho; American Ambassador Philip Habib; Pastor Norbert Klein of the Evangelical Central Agency, Germany; Lee Choon-sung, governor of Cholla-pukto; Dr. Paul Crane, representing the Board of World Missions of the Presbyterian Church, (the man I was interested to hear someone in America call "Mr. Korea." And oh, how pretty his wife Sophie looked today, and how good to see them in Korea again!

A construction report by Rev. Homer Rickabaugh, who as building committee chairman and as the man responsible for writing a brief history of the hospital had put in so many hours, so many details, so many meetings, so many headaches, along with business administrator Merrill Grubbs, their wives, and the unsung heroes on the committee.

Rev. Kim Yune-shik, chairman of the board of directors of the hospital presented the key to the hospital.

Certificates of appreciation to many, mayors and governors and Assembly men who had helped in the past; to Dr. Evelyn Green (in pink *hanbok*, of the women of the American church who gave \$400,000 toward the hospital; to Dr. John Barksdale, representing the Board of World Missionaries who sent people; to David Seel who dreamed a dream.

Introductions, announcements, heartfelt Doxology... then the ribbon cutting ceremony (surely we'll see it in the



of a family reunion feeling too with warm handclaps, and happy exclamations in several languages—"when did you get here? It's so good to see you!" Ahead of me in the sign-in line a Pakistani girl, an Indian couple, an American Air Force officer and a clutch of Seoul doctors were writing their names between greeting friends.

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"In one sense, the dream is fulfilled before our eyes—a gleaming structure where two years ago there were but weeds. Yet in a deeper sense the quest stretches before us...to establish a house of refuge where the weary, the afflicted, the heavy-laden can find rest for their souls. Only the presence of Christ can make this possible..."

A hymn — and one knew one was in Korea! "By the beauty of their music shall ye know them!" could surely describe Koreans.

The anthem was "The Heavens Declare the Glory of God" which I have always associated with dark, star-spangled skies. All of a sudden I realized how applicable these words of affirmation are to the high clear blue benvolent expanse of the autumn sky in Korea.

Dr. Kim Hyung-nam, president of Soong-Jun University, gave the scripture reading, and I thought of this

for war and peace.
Minister of Health and Social Affairs Lee Kyung-ho; American Ambassador Philip Habib; Pastor Norbert Klein of the Evangelical Central Agency, Germany; Lee Choonsung, governor of Cholla-pukto; Dr. Paul Crane, representing the Board of World Missions of the Presbyterian Church, (the man I was interested to hear someone in America call "Mr. Korea." And oh, how pretty his wife Sophie looked today, and how good to see them in Korea again!

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Introductions, a n n o u n c e m e n t s, heartfelt Doxology... then the ribbon cutting ceremony (surely we'll see it in the movie newsreels!) And thousands swarmed into the gleaming new building to admire and inspect and be glad. Students and grandmothers... a lost child cuddled in a Peace Corps volunteer's arms until her oppa, an inch taller runs in and claims her...heads of state and the very humble.

A few more special faces. Dr. Joanne Smith T, tall, beautiful young woman and dedicated doctor who spent four years in the cramped and dark old building before going to Vietnam, she had come back to Korea for this moment.

Margaret Pritchard, who retired in 1969 after 40 years of missionary service. She founded the nursing school in Chonju and now it will be named for her. How many nurses in this country knew, feared, loved and learned from this wise white-haired lady, beautiful today in her hanbok? She returned a few months ago to help with this ceremony.

Janet Keller, who has quietly and courageously served in this hospital so many years, now director of the nursing school. Her husband died while serving, and she has lived to serve on. This day, such a special one for her, she spent helping to hostess the American visitors and nursing one green-hued missionary. That quiet concern, those cool hands... Janet, how like you! Thank you.

So the ceremony ended, with us all a little richer for it. As the program concluded so will I with these words from the Lord: "I have heard your prayer and your supplication which you have made before me; I have consecrated this house which you have built, and put my name there forever; my eyes and my heart will be there for all time."

Jesus Hospital, *chukha hamnida!*

* * *
Mrs. Huntley is a Presbyterian missionary-journalist living in Kwangju, Chollanamdo.



M-235

Dr. & Mrs. David Seel
P.O. Box 77
Chonju, Korea 520
July 15, 1987

Home Assignment address:
Box 1001, Montreat, NC 28757
tele: 704/669-9358

Dear Friends:

On June 13 we transferred the directorship of "The Jesus Hospital" to Dr. Young T'ae Chung, who has served with me for over 10 years as Vice-Director. It was a meaningful occasion. First of all, we were celebrating the 90th year since the founding of our hospital by Dr. Mattie Ingold, the young woman physician from Rocky Mount, NC, who had the courage to venture into the Korean hinterland at a time of social upheaval to begin a work which God has continued to bless to this day. Secondly, we rejoiced in the inauguration of the first national hospital director. Dr. Chung is an elder in the Presbyterian Church, a man of strong spiritual convictions as well as clinical competence particularly in his field of ophthalmology. Thirdly, the service which Mary and I have given at the hospital for 33 years were remembered with excessive but loving words of gratitude. The Board of Directors of the Hospital has graciously asked me to serve as Coordinator for the Medical Center, to facilitate the inter-relationships between the hospital, the research center, and the nursing college.



In my parting remarks I sought to underscore two concepts which have guided me in the 18 years of my tenure as hospital director. The first of these ideas has been the cultivation of a **healing and witnessing community**. As you know, all members of the hospital team, whether orderlies or medical specialists, are baptized Christians in good standing in a Protestant Christian church. We come together at the hospital to serve in the common cause of witnessing to Jesus Christ through healing ministry. We are therefore the Church at Work. We dare not let factional division mar our fellowship nor interfere with our ministry to the patient, for the patient is central to everything we do. We dare not let secularization, such as the pressures of materialism or academic prestige, damage our commitment to compassionate service. Christ must be preeminent in all that we do.

The second concept I have sought to emphasize is **the heritage of hope** which God has promised and proven to us. From a clinic in a thatched roof house to a medical

complex which (by year's end) will have 500 inpatient beds, a rehabilitation institute, a tumor clinic, a center for research in basic science, community health and mission, a comprehensive maternal and child care center, and a branch hospital for rural inhabitants, God has provided resources through the faithfulness of our partners in America and Korea and other parts of the world. In a day of medical complexity and political uncertainty, we have sought to follow the principles which guided Hudson Taylor in Chifa a century ago:

The Lord's work in the Lord's way
shall not fail to have the Lord's provision

This Lord will not abandon His hospital in Chonju. His character, His purposes, His Kingdom do not change. It is tempting to lose our commitment to the Great Commission because the structures under which we have worked are becoming obsolete, because the realities of global travel and communication only serve to reveal the massiveness of the world's economic and political and military problems and because the explosive needs of humanity overwhelm us. What is a cup of water in the midst of these cosmic battles? How can an act of love alter the shifting tectonic plates that threaten our existence? May we remember that one act of love -- God's beloved Son dying an excruciating death to bear the vileness, the corruption and the shame of the entire human race -- has changed history more than any other event since the creation of this planet, since God fashioned this universe. If Christ be for us, who can be against us?

Faithfully yours,

David and Mary Seel

David and Mary Seel

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